



# Background

## Framework Agreement between Parliament and Commission

Relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission have been governed by a Framework Agreement since 1990. This agreement is updated every five years. As the current agreement was concluded in 2005, another update is now under way.

The Framework Agreement defines the political responsibilities of each institution towards the other and lays down rules for the flow of information between them. As an example, the current agreement states that the Commission President attends meetings of Parliament's Conference of Presidents at least twice a year.

The Framework Agreement also aims to improve the planning and co-ordination of the two institutions' legislative procedures. It has been agreed, for instance, that the Commission shall give Parliament prior notice before withdrawing proposals, and Parliament for its part has undertaken to appoint rapporteurs as soon as the legislative programme is adopted.

Other issues touched upon in the Framework Agreement include the Commission's participation in Parliament's proceedings, access to and handling of confidential information and timetables for the Commission's work programme with respect to Parliament.

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## How is the agreement updated?

Both Parliament and the Commission nominated negotiating teams which held bilateral meetings on the Framework Agreement. Parliament's Conference of Presidents nominated the following Working Party in November 2009:

**Klaus-Heiner Lehne** (EPP, DE), Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs (Chair)  
**Hannes Swoboda** (S&D, AT), Vice-Chair of the S&D Group  
**Diana Wallis** (ALDE, UK), Vice-President  
**Rebecca Harms** (Greens/EFA, DE), Co-Chair of the Greens/EFA Group  
**Dagmar Roth-Behrendt** (S&D, DE), Vice-President

**Paulo Rangel** (EPP, PT), was also invited to the meetings as an observer, due to his position as Constitutional Affairs Committee rapporteur on the issue.

The negotiating teams met several times late in 2009 and early in 2010. European Commission President **José Manuel Barroso** also participated in several of these meetings.

The negotiators reached a common understanding on the key principles to be included in the revised agreement on 27 January. The EP Working Party consequently sent a letter to the Conference of Presidents explaining the results achieved and asked for a resolution on these results to be submitted to the February plenary for a vote.

Parliament voted on the resolution summarising the common principles agreed by the negotiators on 9 February, before it voted the election of the European Commission later the same day. The debate preceding the votes included MEPs' views on the revision of the Framework Agreement.

After Parliament voted on the resolution and the new European Commission was in office, the two institutions' teams started the second phase of the negotiations to finalise the text of the Framework Agreement itself. This finalisation took place in the end of June 2010.

Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee adopted two reports by Paulo RANGEL (EPP, PT) on the Framework Agreement on 4 October 2010. One enshrines the text of the agreement itself, while the other lists the changes needed in Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Both reports will be voted on in plenary on 20 October 2010.

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## Key elements in the revision of the Framework Agreement

These are the key elements of the results of the round of negotiations between Parliament and Commission.

### *Principle of equal treatment for Parliament and the Council of Ministers*

The agreement includes a guarantee that the Commission shall apply the basic principle of an equal treatment for Parliament and the Council of Ministers, especially with regard to access to meetings and provision of contributions or other information, in particular on legislative and budgetary matters.

### *Legislative initiative requests*

According to the agreement, the Commission undertakes to report on the concrete follow-up given to any legislative initiative requests further to the adoption of a legislative initiative report by Parliament, within three months of its adoption. The Commission shall come forward with a legislative proposal after one year at the latest or include the proposal in the next year's work programme. If the Commission does not submit a proposal, it shall give Parliament detailed explanations of the reasons why.

### *Detailed review of Better Law-Making Inter-institutional Agreement*

The agreement also notes a commitment of Parliament and Commission to agree on key changes in the preparation of future negotiations with the Council of Ministers on adapting the Better Law-Making Agreement to the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and changing the way in which the current agreement is put into practice.

The agreed changes state, inter alia, that in areas where Parliament is usually involved in the legislative process, soft law shall be used where appropriate and on a duly justified basis after consultation of Parliament.

Furthermore, the Commission shall make available to Parliament summary information about all infringement procedures, from the letter of formal notice, including, if requested by Parliament, on a case-by-case basis and in compliance with confidentiality rules, on the issues concerned by the infringement procedure.

### *Improving the accountability of the executive*

Another key question in the negotiations for Parliament was improving the accountability of the executive. A Question Hour with Commissioners, including the Vice-President for External Relations/High-Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and following the model of the existing Question Hour with the Commission President, shall be introduced with the aim of reforming the existing Question Time.

Moreover, if Parliament asks the Commission President to withdraw confidence in an individual Member of the Commission, he will seriously consider whether he should request that Member to resign. The President shall either require the resignation of that Member or explain his refusal to do so before Parliament in the following part-session.

### *Full involvement of Parliament in international negotiations*

The agreement foresees that the Commission is committed to a reinforced association with Parliament through immediate and full information of Parliament, at every stage of negotiations, on international agreements and in particular those on trade matters and other negotiations involving the consent procedure.

At international conferences, the Commission shall, in view of Parliament's extended powers under the Lisbon Treaty and to guarantee an efficient flow of information, at Parliament's request, act as facilitator in order to enable the chair of the EP delegation to be granted observer status in relevant meetings and, to this end, guarantee access to EU facilities for Parliament's delegations.

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## *Improved arrangements for programming*

Finally, Parliament's request for improved programming has also been met, as it has been agreed that the College shall meet on an annual basis with the Conference of Presidents and the Conference of Committee Chairs prior to adopting the annual Work Programme, including forthcoming proposals for simplification, major soft law initiatives and withdrawals, in order to prepare for debate and seek a common understanding between the Commission and Parliament.